IV

A DEFENCE OF THE Country-Parson's ADMONITION; Against the EXCEPTIONS OF THE *Plain-Man's Answer.*

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A DEFENCE OF THE Country-Parson's ADMONITION.

THere is a Paper called *The Plain Man's Answer, &c.* which hath made some Reflexions upon *The Country-Parson's Admonition.* But how justly, and with what success, (being directed *to make short work on't*) I do thus *briefly* examine.

The Exceptions against that little Tract are, 1. *General.* 2. *Special.*

1. His *general* Exception is againſt the Perſon who gives you this Advice: Who, as he pretends, is not duely qualified to write *Admonitions*, becauſe he is not Infallible. For thus he expoſtulates with me.

Sir, You do not pretend to ſuch Infallibility; and therefore if I muſt rely upon the Miniſterial Function, I ought, in caſe it can be found, to ſeek out ſuch a one as is unerring. (Plain Man's Anſwer, p. 3.) And again. *But what! muſt I ſtand to the Direction of the Miniſterial Function? Can it ſecure me that the Reverend Divines of the Church of* England *have hit upon the right Senſe of Scripture? But I ſee they pretend not to ſuch an Infallibility. And therefore, Sir, I muſt needs tell you,*

you, That as when I make choice of a Physician or Lawyer, I love to chuse the best; so, if I must make choice of a Director, I must and will make choice of him that can give me security that he neither can *nor* will *lead me astray; for I do not love to relie upon any thing that can deceive me.* (p. 5.)

The Sum of which Charge, when resolved into plain *English*, is this.

These Divines of the Church of England (are so modest) *they dare not pretend to be Infallible* (for they know but in part, 1 Cor. 13. 12.) *and therefore they are not fit to be trusted with the Care of Souls. Do not hearken to them, nor regard their Admonitions. But the Priests of the Church of* Rome (if we could but make you

believe it) *they are Infallible*, i. e. *they neither* can *nor* will *deceive you.*

But are these Missioners in earnest, whilst they insinuate such things? Do they really believe themselves when they talk at this rate? To put them to the Test;

Ask this very Missioner, whether *He*, or any other *private* Priest in the Church of *Rome*, is Infallible? And let him not think to satisfie your Doubts, by declaring, *That he doth not find any other, but those called* Roman Catholics, *that offer to challenge it.* (pag. 2.) What's this to the purpose? We need not be told that they challenge to be Infallible; We do not suspect their Confidence, but expect their Proof.

But now if this Missioner shall

ſhall acknowledge, that neither *he*, nor any other *private* Prieſt is Infallible, (and I know he dares not pretend the contrary) you are then to be admoniſhed, from his own Principles, that ſuch fallible and erring Guides are not fit to be truſted.

You have lately been reminded, *not to pin your Faith upon anothers Sleeve, unleſs you could be ſure that ſuch a one on whom you relie*, could not, *nor* would not *deceive you.* (p.3.) And therefore (*my good Pariſhioners*) ſince ſome body muſt direct you, pray do you conſider, whether it is not more prudent to truſt your own Parſon, than a fallible pretending Prieſt?

If this Miſſioner ſhall then further propoſe, that though

he is not Infallible himſelf, yet he can bring you to an *Infallible Church*, and that's as *good*. To this you may anſwer, That though your Parſon is not Infallible, yet he can bring you to *Infallible Scriptures*, and that's *better*.

And 'tis pertinent to obſerve, That the *Romaniſts* themſelves, as well as *we*, do acknowledge theſe Holy Scriptures to be Infallible: But we *Proteſtants* do declare, That the Church of *Rome* is not Infallible. And therefore, ſince in all doubtful Caſes the ſafeſt part is to be choſen, (and that's ſafeſt, ſay the Prieſts, wherein both Sides are agreed) do you ſtick to the Scriptures, and let them take their Church.

I ſhall not now enter upon the

the Merits of the Cauſe, by examining the Nature of this pretended *Infallibility*. Neither, at preſent, ſhall I take notice of thoſe Reaſons which are here produced by this *Miſſioner* to ſupport it. Theſe, God willing, ſhall be conſidered in their proper place, *viz.* in my *Reflexions upon the Miſſioner's Anſwer to the Plain-man's Reply*. Which I hope, in due time, to publiſh.

So much for his *General* Exception.

His Exceptions in *Special* are againſt thoſe Directions which by way of Expedient I deſired you to obſerve.

1. He is not well pleaſed that I ſend you to your Prayers, *to pray unto God to give you his Grace, to hold faſt the Profeſſion of your Faith with-*

out wavering, Heb. 10. 23.

But this is to correct St. *Paul*, and not the *Country-Parſon*: Who thinks it very proper (ſince we are to pray in Faith) to turn an Apoſtolic Precept into a Prayer: And being admoniſhed by the Apoſtle to *hold faſt our Profeſſion*; in an humble dependance upon the divine Grace, we pray unto God to enable us to do it.

However, at laſt he gives you leave to ſay your Prayers: But then he tells you, it muſt be in this Form; *If I be not in the right, &c.* And, *If I be in the right, &c.*

But will this *Miſſioner* allow his new *Converts* to pray with theſe *If*'s and *Ands*? If he grants them ſuch liberty, let me then deſire them daily to repeat this Prayer. *If*

If the Church of Rome, *of which I have now profeſſed my ſelf a Member, is not a ſound Catholic Church, but in any Inſtance is Erroneous, Superſtitious, and Idolatrous; Lord pardon my Errors, and lead me into the way of Truth. And if the Reformation of the Church of* England *is juſt and warrantable, and agreeable to thy Holy Word; Lord open mine Eyes, that I may acknowledge my miſtake, and return into her Communion.* Amen.

If here it ſhall be further urged, That this Conditional way of Praying is indeed very fit for Proteſtants, who are not *infallibly* ſecure that their Faith is true, being *various* and *uncertain*; (p. 3.)

But theſe kind of Prayers are never to be uſed by Roman Catholics, who are certain

tain that their Faith is true, and that they are in the right, as being Members of an Infallible Church: Tell him,

This is only to talk big, and to be Judge in his own Cauſe. For, 1. A Man may be certain, and ſure that he is in the right, without being Infallible.

2. There is greater uncertainty, more Diviſions and diverſity of Opinions (and that in Matters of Faith) in the Church of *Rome*, than there are in the Church of *England*.

If he ſtartles at the Charge, and thinks himſelf affronted, deſire him (for his ſatisfaction) to return an Anſwer to the Learned Dr. *Stillingfleet* upon that Subject. The

2. Direction (with which like-

likewiſe he is pleaſed to find fault) was this:

When you read the Holy Scriptures, and do find ſome Place which is too difficult for you, do not then pretend to interpret it your ſelves: But beg the Direction of your Spiritual Guide, and deſire him to ſhew you how it is to be underſtood.

It ſeems this Gentleman is reſolved to ſhew his Skill; otherwiſe this *Expedient* (for a Reaſon that he knows) might have paſs'd without his Cenſure.

'Tis very ſurpriſing, that a *Romiſh Prieſt*, who expects ſuch blind Obedience to his Dictates, ſhould yet be thus offended at this honeſt Advice.

But the Reaſon is evident.

For whilſt the good *Proteſtants* of *England* are ſo kind

to

to *Us*, and ſo careful of *themſelves*, as to own their Clergy (as bleſſed be God they do, notwithſtanding all the Arts of *Rome* to withdraw them from us) I ſay, whilſt they ſtick to their Clergy, through God's Bleſſing, they are certainly ſafe.

As to the ſlavery of ſuch Submiſſion (which this Author ſuggeſts) with reſpect to the Church of *England*, 'tis an invidious Reflexion.

We do indeed deſire you to take our Advice; *not for that we have dominion over your Faith, but are helpers of your Joy; for by Faith ye ſtand*, 2 Cor. 1. 24.

Now the Scripture is the only Rule of our Faith; and as ſuch (to uſe his own Expreſſion) *we will ſtand and fall by*

by it. (Plain Man's Anſwer, p. 4.) *And therefore* (as he well reminds you) *you muſt ſearch diligently and ſoberly into it your ſelves.* (Ibid. p. 4.) Imitate thoſe noble *Bereans*, who *received the Word with all readineſs of mind, and ſearched the Scriptures daily, whether thoſe things were ſo*, Acts 17. 11.

But to what purpoſe (thinks this Author) do you read the *Scriptures*, which neither you, nor your Clergy, can pretend to interpret?

And why not? Cannot the Divines of the Church of *England* interpret Scripture as well as the Prieſts of the Church of *Rome?* No, ſaith he, becauſe they are not Infallible. (And thus he upbraids us at leaſt *ten* times in this very Anſwer.)

But

But what ſtrange Impertinence is this? That thoſe Men ſhould be thus concern'd for the want of Infallibility in others, who have ſo little of it themſelves?

For is there any thing more Fallible and Contradicting, than thoſe vaſt Volumes of Popiſh Commentators, that even make our Shelves to crack? And yet all theſe, Fallible as they are, owned, and publiſhed with the uſual *Approbations*, and *Permiſſu Superiorum.*

Now had I leiſure to expoſtulate, I would deſire this Miſſioner (who writes to me in your Name) to reſolve me, That ſince it would be very profitable for all Chriſtians, that the Scriptures ſhould be *infallibly* interpreted; why doth

doth the Church of *Rome* employ particular Doctors to interpret them *fallibly*? Why are ſuch different and contradictory Expoſitions publiſhed by her Authority? Why doth ſhe not rather petition his *Holineſs*, or whoever elſe is beſt able to do it, to explain them *infallibly*? Why doth ſhe *hide her Candle under a Buſhel*, and *keep her Talent*, of interpreting Scripture infallibly, *wrapt up in a Napkin*? How ſuch unfaithfulneſs can be anſwered to her Lord and Maſter *Jeſus Chriſt*, I leave him ſadly to conſider. *To him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is ſin*, James 4. 17.

3. I did direct you, *as far as poſſible, to avoid all Diſputes about Religion.* And thus far he allows you to follow my Advice.

Advice. *For he hates contentions, heats, and animosities.* And indeed so do I, as being fully convinced, that it is much more profitable, both for me and my Parish, to spend my time in Devotion and Practical Discourses, than in these unpleasing Disputes.

And I have great reason to affirm, That the rest of my Brethren of the Church of *England* are likewise of the same mind.

But since the Importunity of others, in seducing our People, hath forced us to it, we dare not now be silent; and think our selves obliged, as good Shepherds, not only to feed our Flocks, but also to keep them from wandring into by-paths, and to defend them from those that would lead them astray. To

To his Exceptions against my *Fourth Expedient*, I do thus reply.

That it will be time enough to enquire after the Privileges of the *Roman* Church, when you are first convinced, That it is your Duty to leave the Communion of the Church of *England*.

Now whoever would persuade you to such a Separation (I told you, if he will proceed rationally and to the purpose) he must first convince you, 'That the *Church* 'of *England* is no sound 'Member of the Church Catholic; but that her Doctrine is either *Defective* or '*False*.

'If he pretends that it is *Defective*, he must then shew, 'that there are some Truths 'ne-

'neceſſarily to be believed,
'as Articles of Faith, which
'the Church of *England* doth
'not receive as ſuch. And
'alſo that there are ſome ne-
'ceſſary Duties, or Parts of
'Worſhip, which the Church
'of *England* either wholly
'omits, or elſe doth not re-
'quire under any ſuch neceſ-
'ſity.

'But if he affirms, *ſecondly*,
'That the Doctrine of the
'Church of *England* is *Falſe*,
'he muſt then prove, That
'the Church of *England* doth
'require ſome *unlawful* Con-
'dition of her Communion;
'and that either in *Faith* or
'*Worſhip*. Plainly thus:

'He muſt make it appear,
'That her Faith is *Erroneous*,
'and contrary to the written
'Word of God, *the Faith*
'*once*

'*once delivered to the Saints.*
'Or elſe, That her Worſhip
'is *Unlawful*, Superſtitious, or
'Idolatrous.

All *this indeed he thought very reaſonable. And becauſe he hath no leiſure for long Enquiries*, (p. 7.) I will not be ſo rude as to preſs him beyond his Meaſures.

However, I muſt be ſo obliging as to aſſure him, That when he hath found his Arguments, I ſhall be ready to attend him.

And now (*my good Pariſhioners*) having diſpatch'd this Anſwer, let me thus briefly enforce my former

ADMONITION.

'TIS a ſerious thing to change your Religion. Eter-

Eternity depends upon it. And therefore 'tis an unpardonable Error, to be guilty of Raſhneſs in ſo weighty a Concern.

Be not perſuaded out of your Senſes with Confidence and Noiſe: Nor do you preſently conclude, that ſome Men are in the *Right*, becauſe they ſay it is impoſſible they ſhould be in the *Wrong*.

If they think to frighten you into their way, by telling you, that you are otherwiſe damned; Regard ſuch Threatnings no more than you would the Ravings of a Quaker. *For not he that commendeth himſelf is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth*, 2 Cor. 10. 18.

Be not diſcouraged, nor ſuſpect the Truth of your Faith,

Faith, becauſe at firſt hearing you cannot anſwer a Sophiſtical *Objection*. Thinking Men, who expect ſolid Arguments, may poſſibly be ſurpriz'd on the ſudden with ſuch ſlender Stuff. For even a Child may puzzle a Stateſman at *Riddle my Riddle*.

But theſe kind of Tricks, when a little examined, how trifling do they appear? and ſignifie nothing but the Confidence of thoſe who urge them.

Remember this, and ſhew your ſelves Men.

FINIS.

MAY